



***Milwaukee County's  
Connecting Caring Communities Partnership***



# ***Now at sixty what I see...***

***A Report on the Lives of Milwaukee County's Older Adults –  
How They Live In and Give To Our Community***

***A Project funded by the Robert Wood  
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Partnerships for Older Adults Program,  
Helen Bader Foundation, and Faye  
McBeath Foundation***

***Assessing the Needs of Older  
Adults in Milwaukee County***

Prepared by  
E jj Olson & Associates

**August 2003**

At twenty, stooping round about,  
I thought the world a miserable place,  
Truth a trick, faith in doubt,  
Little beauty, less grace.

Now at sixty what I see,  
Although the world is worse by far,  
Stops my heart in ecstasy.  
God, the wonders that there are!

*Archibald MacLeish*  
*"With Age Wisdom," c. 1952*



# *Executive Summary*

*Now at sixty what I see...*

## **Working In Partnership**

In his poem, “With Age Wisdom,” Archibald MacLeish reflects on the attitudes of youth and expresses the awe and wonder that the wisdom of advancing age brings to his view of the world around him. We too are examining the world around us, assessing strengths and issues, and in this process asking ourselves the question, “What kind of community do the more than 153,000 older adults in Milwaukee County see?” Older adults represent a significant and growing population in the county. During 2000, individuals age 60 years and older comprised 16% of all persons. Projections indicate the older adult population in the county will increase nearly 50% during the next two decades to total nearly 228,000 and comprise more than 20% of all persons during the year 2020. Fortunately, many in the county are committed to meeting the needs of this burgeoning elder population. A long history of working in partnership has yielded great rewards.

## **Building On Assets**

A recent national survey of older adults in the 13 Community Partnerships for Older Adults grantee sites found that older adults in Milwaukee County are better educated, healthier, more connected with family, and more likely to socialize in either religious or secular settings than their counterparts at other sites throughout the country. In addition, older adults in Milwaukee County have access to three nationally renowned long term care resources that are largely unique. These include the Family Care program of integrated Medicaid funding for long term care, part of Wisconsin’s long term care redesign; the PACE/Partnership program of integrated Medicaid/Medicare funding providing a full spectrum of health,

medical, and social services for frail older adults; and Elderlink, the county-operated information and assistance telephone line providing a single point of entry and access to long term care and aging related services and programs.

## **Looking at Unmet Needs**

While there is good reason to be proud of our accomplishments to date, a significant body of information indicates there is still much work to be done. Much of the information assembled by community partners leads us to conclude that there continues to be significant unmet needs among the older adult population in the county in a number of issue areas.

## **Defining the Issues**

A review of data gathered from various federal, state, and local reports indicates that many older adults in Milwaukee County have been left behind, are in need of support, and need to be reached with appropriate services and information. Some of these sources include statistics provided by the United States Bureau of the Census, the results of a random survey of older adults in Milwaukee County conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Institute Inc., as well as information gathered during public hearings, focus groups, and interviews conducted with older adults, their caregivers, and the general public at locations throughout the county.

***Income & Poverty:*** The proportion of the older adult population living in poverty in the county increased during the last decade from seven to nine percent, and continues to exceed the rate of poverty for older adults throughout the state.

**Health & Health Care:** Similarly, the rate of disability among the older adult population in the county at 40% exceeds the rate of disability statewide, as do the rates of mortality, morbidity, and hospitalization among the 65+ population in the county. The high cost of medical care and a lack of adequate health care coverage are issues for many older adults. Results of a recent survey indicate 6% of vulnerable adults in the county have problems paying for medical care, while 28% have no prescription drug coverage.

**Housing & Homelessness:** Helping older adults to live as independently as possible in their own homes is a major focus of current long term care policy. However, the county's aging housing stock and increasing housing costs present older adults with significant challenges. Nearly two-thirds of the housing stock in the county is 40 years and older. Many older adults report their homes are in need of significant repairs or modifications in order to improve their ability to live there over the next five years. With housing costs in the county increasing 60% during the past decade, nearly one-third of older adults report insecurity regarding their ability to remain in their current residences due to economic reasons.

**Transportation:** Transportation resources in the county have not kept pace with demand, and the lack of quality transportation alternatives is an issue commonly voiced by older adults in the community. A lack of transportation keeps 7% of vulnerable adults from leaving their homes more often.

**Caregiving:** In Milwaukee County, 11% of vulnerable adults have one or more limitations in performing the activities of daily living (ADL), while 20% have one or more limitations in performing instrumental activities of daily living (IADL). For caregivers, the emotional and physical drain of providing care and a lack of support for their efforts can be frustrating.

**Long Term Care:** Information gathered locally indicates generally negative associations and confusion surrounding long term care programs and services. A series of focus groups conducted with representative samples of older adults, caregivers, and the general public revealed a lack of understanding of long term care terminology, erroneous beliefs about the ways in which long term care is paid for, and limited awareness of long term care's available resources and access points.

**Access, Information & Referral:** Knowing where and how to get information about the resources they need is a problem for many older adults and their caregivers. Fifteen percent of older adults surveyed in Milwaukee County don't know where to turn for information about help with personal care at home. Many others are unaware of the availability of specific aging related services including home repair assistance, telephone helpline, and housekeeping services.

**Diversity & Cultural Competence:** Older adults of color comprise more than 15% of the older adult population in the county, and represent nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of all minority elders in the state. All of this underscores the need to provide culturally and ethnically relevant materials and outreach activities.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community of older adults in Milwaukee County is estimated to number from 9,000 – 15,000 persons, highlighting the need for age appropriate housing and additional opportunities for socialization and recreation for this population.

**Community Connections:** Other barriers for older persons in Milwaukee County include social isolation and a lack of connection to the community. Nearly one-third of older adults in the county live

alone, and some rarely or never leave their homes. Nearly one-third of vulnerable adults report that they leave their homes three days per week or less, while 3% report that they never leave home for any reason. Some of the limiting factors include reduced mobility, ill health, lack of transportation, low income, and personal safety. Fear for personal safety due to crime was found to be the number one issue of concern among older adults participating in a series of surveys, interviews and focus groups conducted in the Sherman Park and Layton Boulevard neighborhoods. While the fear of crime may be more serious than the actual risk, the perception of personal safety as an issue often limits the willingness of older adults to venture into the community, socialize with neighbors, and utilize public transportation.

Helping older adults to feel involved and connected to the community is the challenge in Milwaukee County. One-third (30.9%) feel local officials don't take into account their interests and concerns, and believe they have little or no control in making their community a better place to live (29%). Though much of this fatalism may be attributable to a brief period of political disquiet\*, it is significant that a majority of older adults feels the community should be doing more to meet their needs. Some 81% of older adults in the county indicate the community needs to do more in dealing with the needs of frail elders, with 77% feeling that this is either very or extremely important (Mathematica).

### **Establishing Priorities**

At a June 3, 2003 meeting, the Partnership reviewed the information contained in this report and prioritized the issues of concern for older adults in Milwaukee County. The prioritized issues include:

- (1) Access, Information and Referral**
- (2) Health & Health Care**
- (3) Long Term Care**
- (4) Community Connections**
- (5) Housing**
- (6) Transportation**
- (7) Caregiving**
- (8) Mental Health**
- (9) Diversity and Cultural Competence**
- (10) Elder Abuse**

It is the collective vision of Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities Partnership to address these issues by working together to improve the care and services available to older adults, resulting in a community where older people are able to draw upon and contribute to the resources of their neighborhoods and the community at large. When older people need long term care, it should be available, easily accessible, affordable, and of high quality. It is our mission to strengthen the system of long term care for Milwaukee County's vulnerable older adults and their caregivers through developing, nurturing, and supporting partnerships with all stakeholders.

\*Opinions reflect those collected in concurrence with a brief, highly publicized grassroots movement in Milwaukee County to recall a number of elected officials due to general widespread public dissatisfaction with the management of county finances.



## *Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities Partnership*

# *Introduction*

Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities is a multi-faceted project broadening the circle of partnership to improve the long term care system in Milwaukee County, and ultimately to improve the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers. The project is targeted to older adults age 60 years and older including those who are healthy and active, those who are vulnerable, and those who are quite frail. Underlying this project are the beliefs that: 1) older adults and their caregivers should know where to turn to get the support they need in their long term care planning efforts and when they are in need of services; 2) older adults deserve information that is understandable, straightforward, and accessible; and 3) older adults should have the opportunity to age in place in their own homes.

### *Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities Partnership*

#### ***Vision***

Stakeholders work together to improve the care and services available to older adults, resulting in a community where older people are able to draw upon and contribute to the resources of their neighborhoods and the community at large. When older people need long term care, it is available, easily accessible, affordable, and of high quality.

#### ***Mission***

To strengthen the system of long term care for Milwaukee County's vulnerable older adults and their caregivers through developing, nurturing, and supporting partnerships with all stakeholders.

## **Setting Goals**

Connecting Caring Communities represents the collective dream of a countywide Partnership of more than 120 agencies and individuals, and the efforts of the members of four component work groups and related advisory committees to commit resources and energy to develop real solutions and explore bold yet sensible approaches to communicate long term care messages to the public, increase the retention of professional caregivers, and create elder friendly neighborhoods in the community. The goals of the Connecting Caring Communities initiative include:

### ***Connecting Caring Communities Goals***

1. **Increase Access to Services** by effectively and consistently communicating messages to older adults and their caregivers.
2. **Improve the Quality of Services** for older adults by creating a new paradigm in which issues are addressed and solutions are forged across stakeholder lines.
3. **Create "Elder Friendly" Neighborhoods** by developing two neighborhood pilots that will identify community assets and new ways to use resources for the benefit of older adult residents.
4. **Fortify the Older Adult Partnership Infrastructure** by developing a strategic plan that is feasible, measurable, and has the commitment of key stakeholders.



# Methodology

## Working *in Partnership*

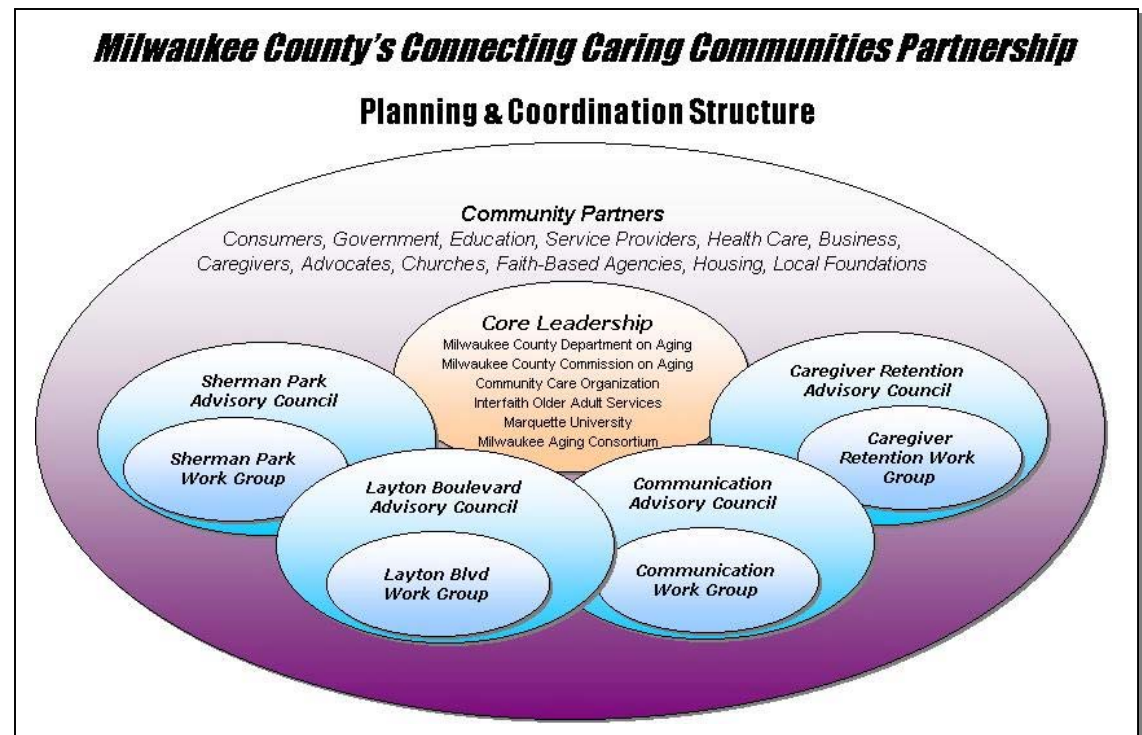
Milwaukee's real strength is its ability to rally committed organizations around an issue and produce tangible results. The members of the Connecting Caring Communities Partnership in Milwaukee County share a long history of collaboration and include some of the most active and visible collaborators in the community. Throughout this process, every effort has been made to gather input from a broad cross-section of the community and promote inclusion by stakeholders broadly representative of the long-term care community in Milwaukee County. The Partnership includes representation by consumers, government, education, service providers, health care, business, caregivers, advocates, churches, faith-based agencies, housing, local foundations, and others.

## Consumer Inclusion

Because the members of the Partnership are committed to consumer inclusion, older adults are integral participants at all levels of the project. Milwaukee is fortunate to have many celebrated older adult leaders, many of whom are involved in Partnership activities. The Partnership and Core Leadership Group is co-chaired by the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Chairperson, while the 16-member Commission on Aging is responsible for project oversight. Input has been gathered from older adults and caregivers during the facilitation of a number of public hearings and focus groups, and with the administration of surveys in the community. Older adults and caregivers have actively participated in each of the four component work groups as well.

## Core Leadership

The Milwaukee County Department on Aging spearheads the Connecting Caring Communities initiative in the county. A Core Leadership Group comprised of representatives of the Milwaukee County Department on Aging, Marquette University, Community Care Organization, Interfaith Older Adult Programs, the Milwaukee Aging Consortium, and the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging serves as the Executive Committee of the Partnership and is responsible for developing and sharing communications about the project with each other and with the community at large.



## Taking the ***Initiative***

Four Work Groups and related Advisory Councils have been established and are actively engaged in developing specific portions of the project to address the Connecting Caring Communities Goals.

### **Work Group 1: Communication**

The subject of long term care can be confusing for people outside the long term care industry. The public is generally unfamiliar with the language, tends to have erroneous beliefs about the ways in which it is paid for, and has limited awareness of long term care's available resources and access points. While marketing efforts have helped to increase awareness of specific long term care options in the community such as assisted living, there continues to be a general lack of understanding of the need for early long term care education and planning. The Communication Work Group is examining ways to effectively and consistently communicate messages about long term care to older adults and their caregivers in Milwaukee County.

### **Work Group 2: Caregiver Retention Project**

Caregiver turnover rates in Wisconsin during 2001 were as high as 95-97%. One of the causes of this turnover is caregiver dissatisfaction due to low pay, limited benefits, lack of advancement opportunities, and lack of contact and support from administrators. In addition, caregiver classes often do not properly train individuals for the complexity and volume of work in the field. The resultant caregiver and administrative turnover degrades the quality of care and increases costs. The Caregiver Retention Project is examining the causes of professional caregiver turnover and developing methods to improve retention.

### **Work Group 3: Layton Boulevard Corridor of Aging Excellence**

The Layton Boulevard neighborhood in Milwaukee's near south side presents a tremendous opportunity to create a prototype elder-

friendly community with its high density of older adults and myriad of service providers. The neighborhood offers a mix of public housing and private apartment complexes, a number of older adult and other social service providers, and a recently-vacated building which offers further resource possibilities. In addition, there are many historic homes in the area and a mix of merchants. The Layton Boulevard work group is creating a visible "Corridor of Aging Excellence" setting new standards and developing new service delivery arrangements to connect older people to each other and to aging related service systems, while at the same time determining how these systems can better organize their resources.

### **Work Group 4: Sherman Park Neighborhood of Connections**

The Sherman Park neighborhood in Milwaukee's near north side is comprised of low to middle income residents residing in mostly single-family homes. The racial breakdown of the neighborhood is 15.9% White and 78.7% Black. Many older adults in the Sherman Park area face significant financial barriers. Some 11% of older adults in the neighborhood live below the poverty level, with the rate in some census tracts as high as 29.3%. In addition, many older adults live alone in single-family homes, raising issues of isolation as a service barrier. While the area does not have a vast amount of aging related resources, the Sherman Park work group is building on the existing assets, to connect older adults with resources and information.

## Gauging the Status of ***Older Adults***

An integral part of the planning process has been an assessment of the older adult population in the county. The Partnership has assembled and examined existing information indicating the status and needs of county residents age 60+ years available from a variety of federal, state, and local data sources. Supporting this information is a new study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. for



the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Partnerships for Older Adults Program, as well as a collection of extensive community input gathered by the Milwaukee County Connecting Caring Communities Partnership during twenty **Public Hearings** held with older adults and service providers at locations throughout the county; **Focus Groups** conducted with a broad cross-section of older adults, caregivers, community service groups, and the general public; and **Interviews** with community members in neighborhoods throughout the area.

### **Data Sources**

While many sources of information were used to assemble this report, some of the most commonly referenced materials include:

- United States Bureau of the Census, (referenced as US Census). Sociodemographic and housing data from the 1990 and 2000 Census provide the foundation for an objective examination of the status of the older adult population in Milwaukee County and how it has changed over time. US Census information has been supplemented with projections of the population through the year 2020 provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration.
- Survey of Older Adults conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Institute Inc., and funded by Community Partnerships for Older Adults, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (referenced as Mathematica). A random digit dial telephone survey of 378 older adults (age 50+) in Milwaukee County was conducted during 2002, designed to provide a snapshot of older adults' health and demographic characteristics, their awareness of long term care issues and availability of services, and their use of services in the community. Survey topics included residents' attitudes toward the community, living situation, awareness of the availability of long term care services locally, use of and unmet need for long

term care services, health status, and utilization of health care services.

- Public Health Profiles for Milwaukee County (referenced as Public Health Profile). Public Health Profiles compiled by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Bureau of Health Information provide an annual summary of the major indices of health in each county in Wisconsin, and include estimates of population, indicators of morbidity and long term care, and numbers and rates of mortality and hospitalization by age and by cause.
- Public Hearings conducted by the Milwaukee County Department on Aging (referenced as MCDA Public Hearings). During June-August 2002, twenty public hearings were held with members of the community at locations throughout Milwaukee County in order to gather their input regarding the issues faced by older adults. Attendance ranged from 20-50 participants at each session, with cumulative participation totaling approximately 600 individuals. Input was encouraged from a broad cross-section of cultural groups and communities throughout the county, with a number of events targeting participation by Hispanic, Russian-speaking, and Hmong/Laotian older adults. Additional input was gathered from service providers during a session conducted with the Milwaukee Aging Consortium.
- Focus Groups conducted by Marquette University College of Communication and the Wisconsin Geriatric Education Center (referenced as Focus Groups). During October 2002 - January 2003, eight focus groups were conducted with older adults, caregivers, and the general public in Milwaukee County to ascertain participant perceptions and understanding of long term care, its terminology and services, and the communication channels used to receive information or services about long term care choices.

- Surveys, interviews, and focus groups conducted by the Community Care Organization, Interfaith Older Adult Services, and the UWM Institute on Aging and Environment with community members in two target neighborhoods in Milwaukee County (referenced as Target Neighborhoods). During 2002-03, a series of surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted with older adults and other community representatives and ambassadors in the Layton Boulevard Corridor and Sherman Park Neighborhoods in order to assess the conditions and issues of concern for older adults in each neighborhood, and identify programs to address the issues.

Additional sources of information that were referenced in the development of this report include:

- Listening to Our Seniors: A Report of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging with Recommendations of the 2001 Advisory Council Work Groups (October 2001)
- Milwaukee County Plan for Older People 2003-2005
- Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being (August 2000)
- SAGE/Milwaukee Needs Assessment of LGBT 50+ Community and Milwaukee Service Providers: Report to SAGE/Milwaukee and Milwaukee County Department on Aging (April 2001)
- Specialized Transportation in Milwaukee County: A Model for Coordination (January 1997)
- Wisconsin Health Insurance Coverage 2000
- Wisconsin Family Health Survey 2001

By synthesizing the information provided in these and other federal, state, and local reports, the Partnership has produced a snapshot of the status of older adults age 60+ in Milwaukee County. While the information presented here is by no means comprehensive in nature,

it will be expanded as the Partnership matures and additional data sets are identified and/or generated through Partnership activities. Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities initiative is most definitely a work in progress.

## **Building On Assets**

Building on existing community strengths is a primary strategy of the Connecting Caring Communities Partnership. Aggregate results of a 2002 study conducted by the Mathematica Policy Research Institute of 5,298 older adults (50+) at 13 sites across the country, including 378 in Milwaukee County, indicate older adults in Milwaukee may be better off than their counterparts at other sites nationally in a number of areas. When compared to the combined results from 12 other survey sites in the nation, older adults in Milwaukee County are:

- **Better Educated:** 84% of older adults in the county have a high school degree/GED or higher versus 81% at other sites.
- **Healthier:** Fewer than 3 in 10 vulnerable adults rate their health as either fair or poor, versus more than 4 in 10 at other sites.
- **More Mobile:** 93% of vulnerable adults report they always or almost always have access to transportation, versus 89% at other sites.
- **More Connected With Family:** 74% of older adults live either with their children or within 20 minutes of them, versus 63% at other sites.
- **More Likely to Socialize in Either Religious or Secular Settings:** 65% of vulnerable adults had participated in a religious gathering during the past week, versus 55% at other sites.

In addition, older adults in the county have access to three major long-term care resources, which are nationally renowned and largely unique to Milwaukee County. These include the ***Family Care*** program of integrated Medicaid funding for long-term care, part of Wisconsin's long-term care redesign; the ***PACE/Partnership*** program of integrated Medicaid/Medicare funding providing a full spectrum of health, medical, and social services for frail older adults who choose to stay in their own homes; and ***Elderlink***, the county-operated information and assistance telephone line providing a single point of entry and access to long term care and aging related services and programs.

area. Within each issue area, data is presented illustrating the degree of need in the older adult community in the county.

## Looking At ***Unmet Needs***

Though Milwaukee County has much to be proud of, there is still much work to be done. Much of the information assembled by the Partnership indicates there continue to be significant unmet needs among the older adult population in the county in a number of issue areas. Among these issues are:

- Income & Poverty
- Health & Health Care
- Mental Health
- Housing
- Transportation
- Caregiving
- Long Term Care
- Access, Information, & Referral
- Diversity & Cultural Competence
- Community Connections

The following report presents a profile of aging in Milwaukee County and examines indicators of unmet need relative to each issue

# Demographics

## Population of Older Adults

Older adults are an important and growing age segment nationally and in Wisconsin. In Milwaukee County during 2000, the population of older adults ages 60 years and older numbered 153,189 and comprised 16.3% of all persons in the county. Projections indicate the older adult population in the county will increase nearly 50% during the next two decades to number 227,831 and comprise 20.6% of all persons during 2020.

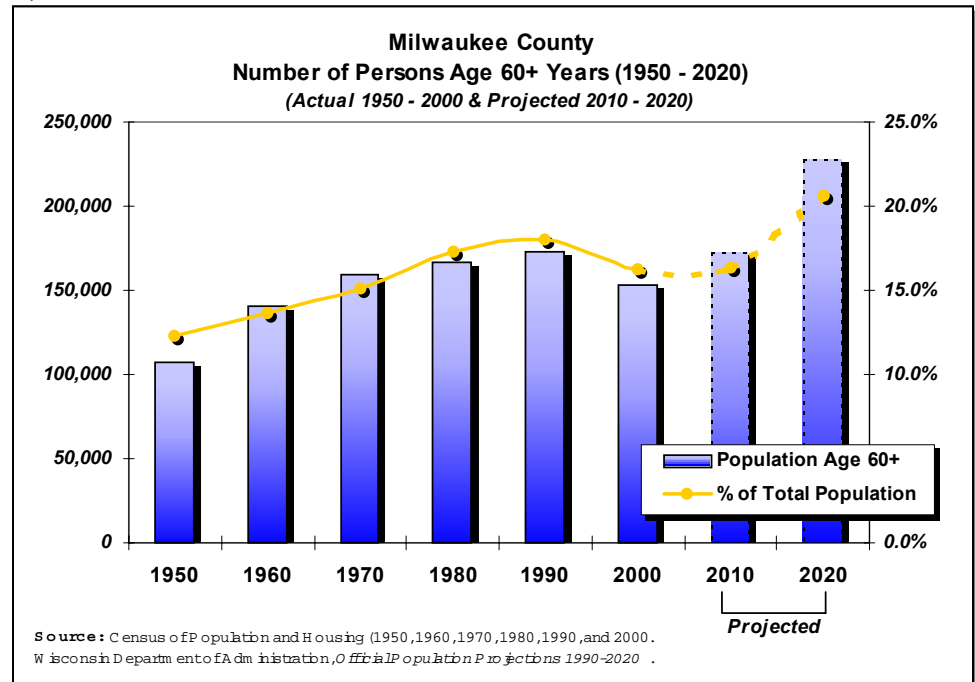
When examined by age category, persons age 60-64 numbered 31,504 and comprised 20.6% of older adults; persons age 65-74 years numbered 59,920 and comprised 39.1% of older adults; persons age 75-84 numbered 45,253 and comprised 29.5% of older adults; and persons age 85+ numbered 16,512 and comprised 10.8% of older adults in the county. Nearly one in five persons age 70 years and older in Wisconsin resided in Milwaukee County. In fact the fastest growing age group within the older adult population in the county is among persons 85 or older. From 1990 to 2000, this group increased 12.5% from 14,673 to 16,512.

## Gender

Women comprise the majority of older adults in the county and make up an increasing proportion of the older adult population with increasing age. Women comprise 54.4% of all persons age 60-64, 57.0% of all persons age 65-74, 62.3% of all persons 75-84, and 74.2% of all persons age 85 and older.

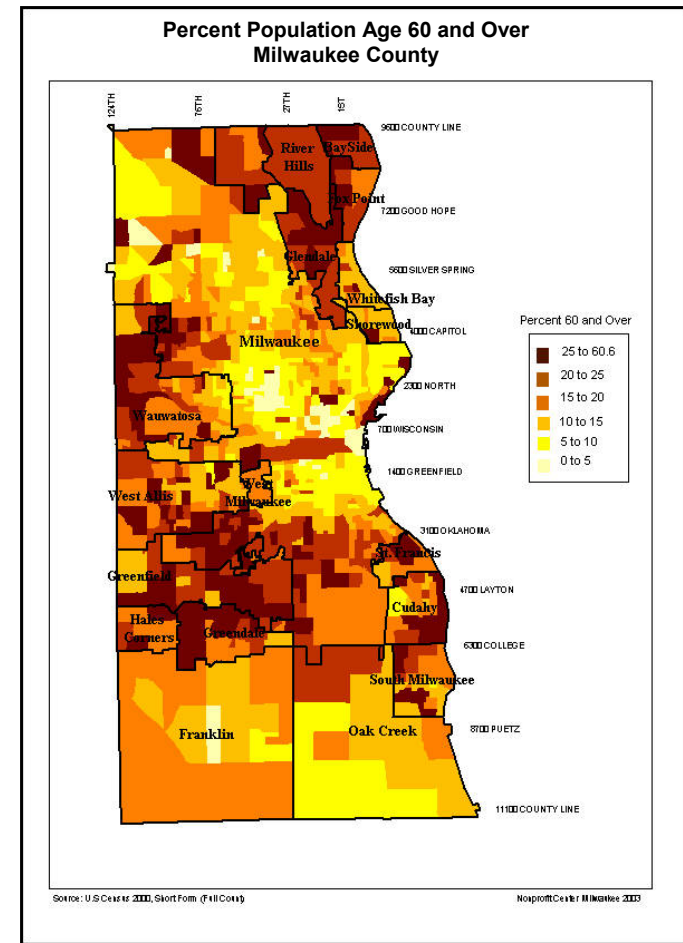
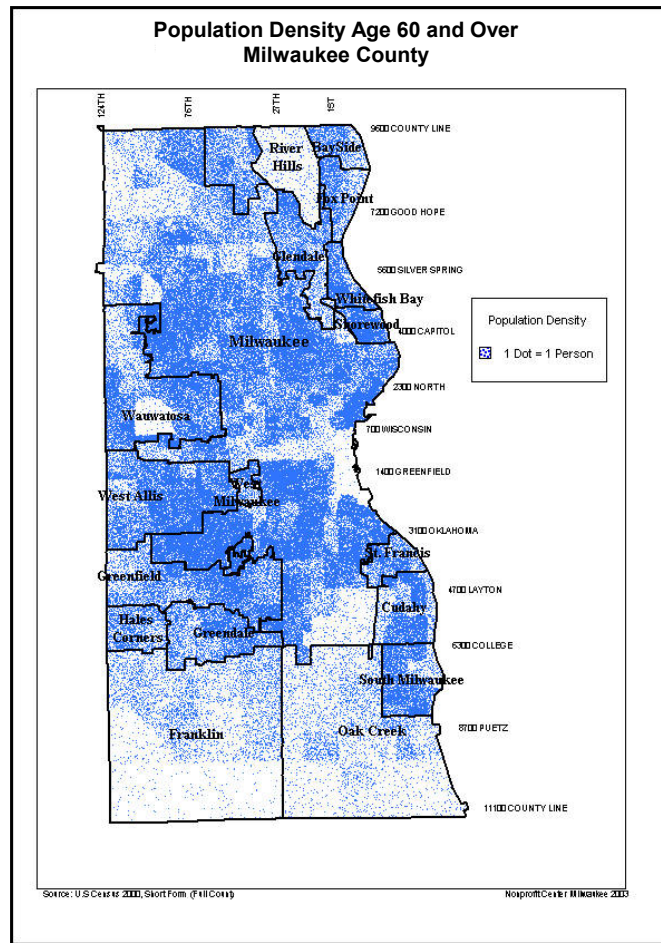
## Race & Ethnicity

The composition of the age 60+ population in the county by race/ethnicity includes 84.8% White, 12.3% Black or African American, 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American, with 2.5% Hispanic or Latino across all races. Minority elders comprise 15.2% of older adults in Milwaukee County; yet comprise a smaller proportion of all persons of color when compared to their Caucasian counterparts. During 2000, individuals age 60+ comprised 21.1% of Whites, but only 8.2% of Blacks or African Americans, 4.6% of Hispanics or Latinos, 6.9% of American Indian and Alaskan Natives, 6.4% of Asians, 6.2% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders, 3.3% of Some Other Race and 4.8% of Two or More Races.



## Distribution of Older Adults

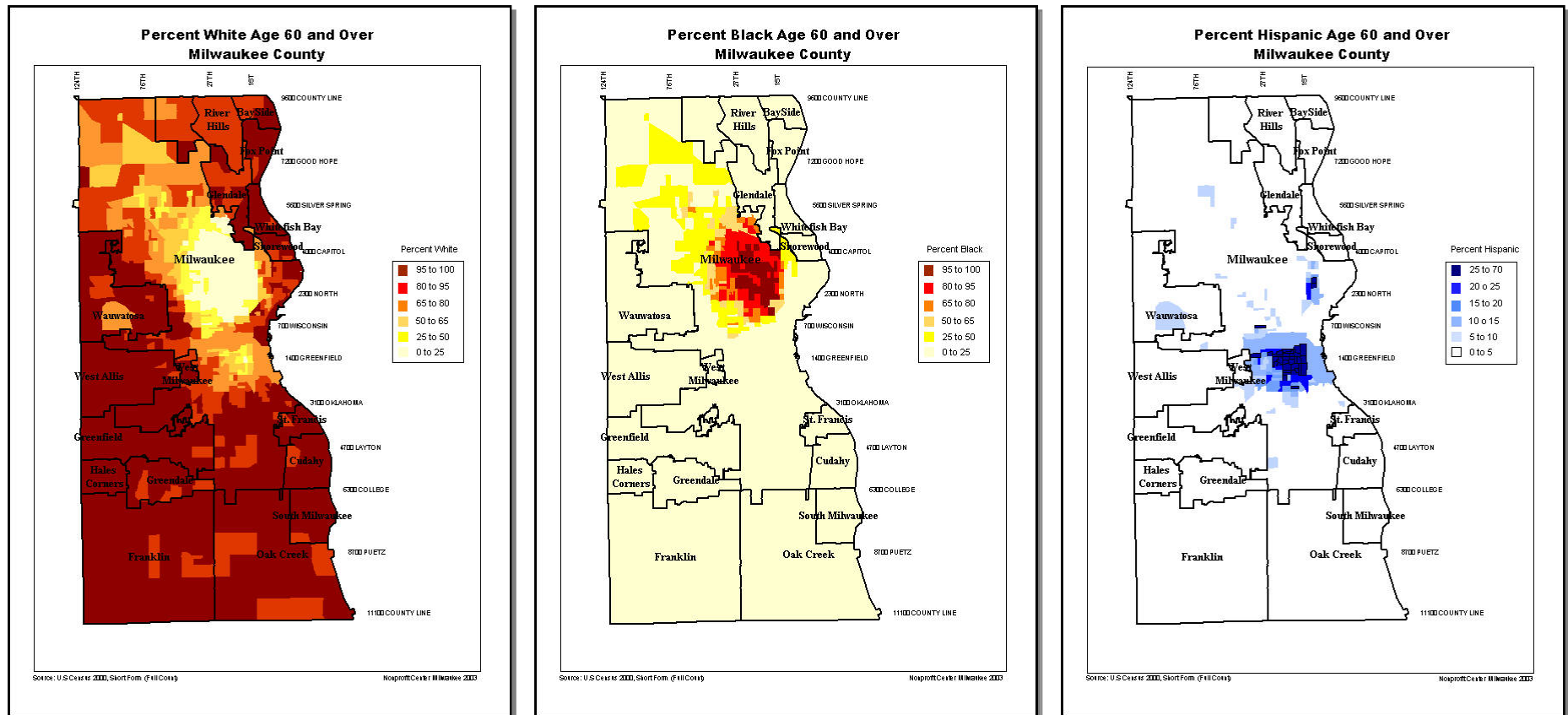
Persons age 60 and over reside in communities throughout the county, but tend to be more highly clustered in certain areas including: 1) Northern suburbs of Glendale, Fox Point, Bayside, Whitefish Bay, and Shorewood; 2) City of Milwaukee North and Near North Side; 3) City of Milwaukee South and Near South Side; 4) Southern suburbs of St. Francis, Cudahy, and South Milwaukee; 5) Western suburbs of West Allis and Greenfield. This is largely confirmed with the examination of older adults as a proportion of the total population. Persons age 60 and older make up from 20-60% of the population in many of these same areas.





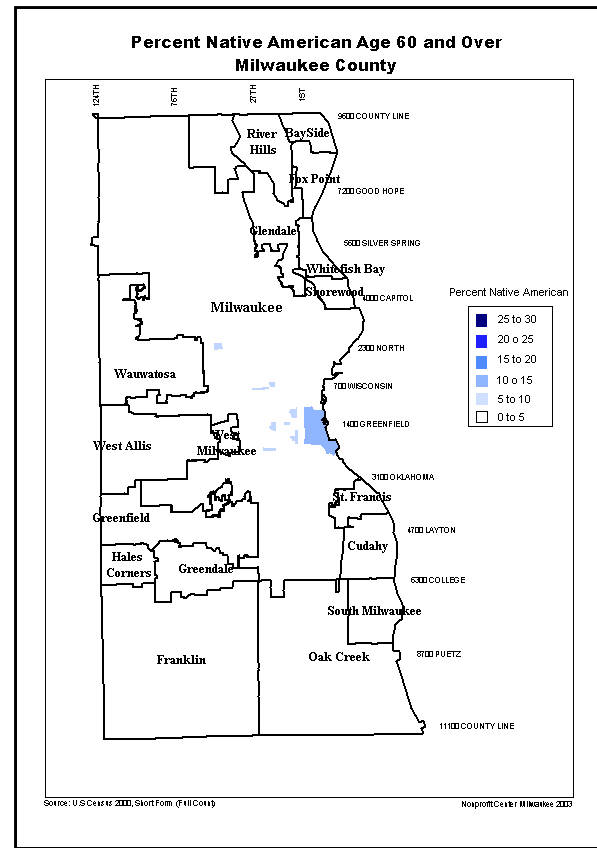
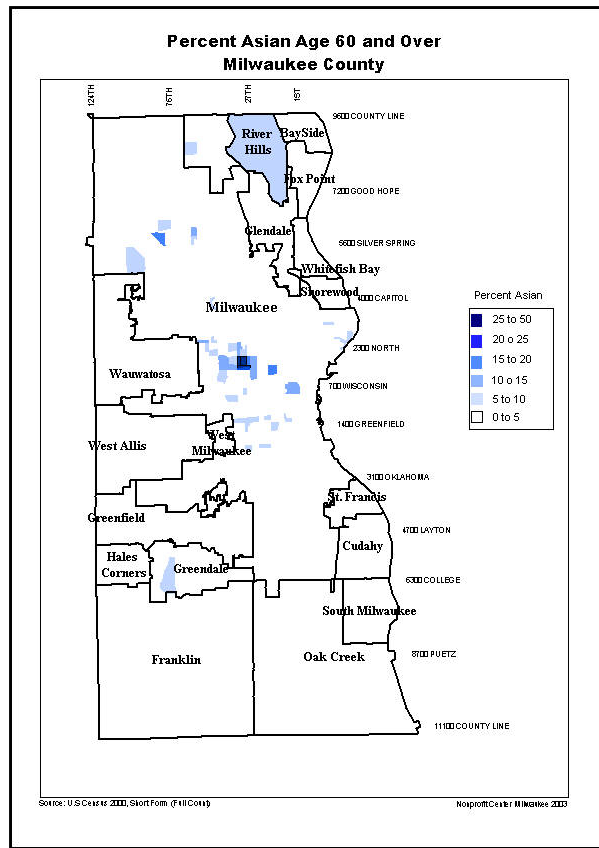
## Distribution of Older Adults by Race

Contrasts in the geographic distribution of older adults in Milwaukee County by race are striking. Caucasian elders make up a significant proportion of older adults in all areas of the county save the north and near north side of the City of Milwaukee. Conversely, African American elders comprise a significant proportion of all older adults in north and near north side neighborhoods. Hispanic elders tend to be clustered in neighborhoods just south of the downtown area of the City of Milwaukee.





Asian elders comprise a large proportion of older adults in neighborhoods just west of the city and in the northern suburb of River Hills, while Native American elders are clustered in neighborhoods south of the downtown area along the eastern edge of the county.

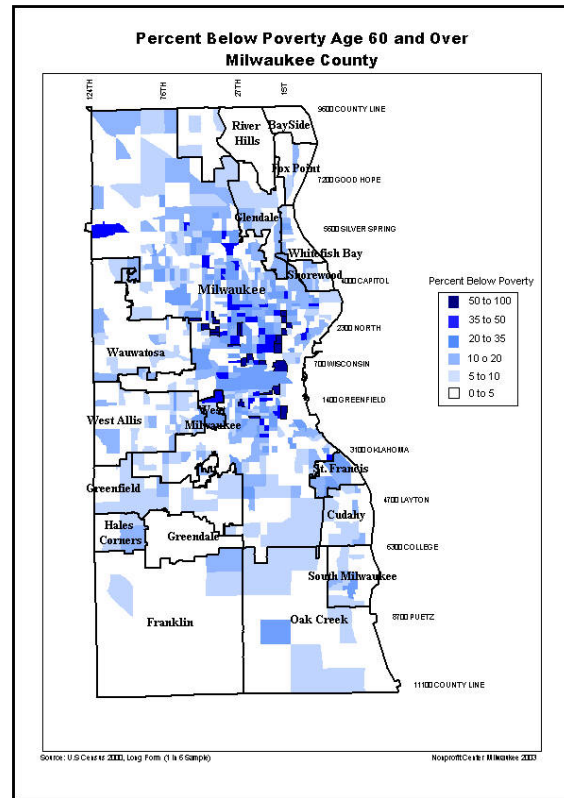


## Defining the Issues

### Income & Poverty

Poverty is increasing among the older adult population in Milwaukee County. During 1989, slightly more than 7% of older adults (65+) in the county had incomes at or below poverty level (US Census 1990). Today, 9% of Milwaukee County's older adult population lives in poverty, and comprises 7% of all persons in the county living in poverty. Older adults in Milwaukee County face higher rates of poverty than do their counterparts throughout the state, with the aforementioned 9% of older adults in the county living in poverty, versus 7% of older adults in Wisconsin (US Census 2000).

Limited income impacts the health and quality of life for many older persons by limiting access to basic needs. Some 13% of vulnerable adults in Milwaukee County report they had problems paying for medical care, prescription drugs, and/or dental and vision care (Mathematica).



### Health & Health Care

#### Health Status

During 2000, an individual celebrating his/her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday could expect to live on average an additional 18 years (19.2 years for women, 16.3 years for men). The impact of health status on quality of life cannot be overstated, particularly for individuals during their later years. Unfortunately, one in five (19.3%) persons age 50 and older in Milwaukee County rate their health status as either fair or poor (Mathematica). Many older adults experience key health risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity that place them at increased risk for disability and death. Disability affects a significant proportion of the older adult population in the county. More than 45,624 individuals age 65+ in the county live with a disability. The rate of disability among older adults in the county at 39.7% is significantly higher than among older adults throughout the state at 36.5% (US Census 2000). In fact, Milwaukee County has the highest proportion of vulnerable adults in the community at 46.5% among 13 sites surveyed nationally (Mathematica).

#### Mortality

Mortality rates among older adults (65+) in Milwaukee County are higher than in the state. During 2001, some 6,643 older adult deaths comprised a countywide mortality rate of 5475.6 per 100,000, much higher than the Wisconsin state rate during the same year of 5160.9 per 100,000. The leading causes of death among older adults in the county include many of those associated with chronic conditions including Heart Disease, Lung and Other Cancers, Cerebrovascular Disease, Cardio Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and Hypertension (Public Health Profile 2001).

### **Morbidity**

Chronic health conditions are epidemic among older adults in Milwaukee County, and are a major cause of disease and death. Four out of five (79%) older adults in Milwaukee County have one or more chronic health conditions including cancer, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, heart attack, stroke, asthma, emphysema of chronic bronchitis, and arthritis (WI Family Health Survey 1994-98). This is confirmed by the study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. in which a significant proportion of older adults reported one or more physician diagnosed health conditions including Hypertension or high blood pressure (47.3%), Heart attack or other heart disease (31.9%), Cancer (9.1%), Diabetes (27.7%), Arthritis (50.9%), Asthma (10.3%), Other lung Disease (12.6%), Stroke (11.5%), and Kidney failure (2.1%). Health problems were cited by 22% of vulnerable adults as the reason they were unable to leave their home more than three days per week (Mathematica).

The age 65+ population in Milwaukee County exhibits the highest numbers and rates of hospitalization among all age groups in the county, and is hospitalized at a rate higher than for older adults throughout the state. During 2001, older adults in the county were hospitalized 45,730 times at a rate of 377.0 per 1000, higher than the Wisconsin hospitalization rate for older adults of 317.6 per 1000 during the same year (Public Health Profile 2001).

### **Prevention & Wellness**

Health prevention and wellness is an issue on the minds of older adults in the county. Many express a desire for additional opportunities for blood pressure and vision screenings at convenient locations and times (MCDA Public Hearings). Sedentary lifestyle and being overweight continue to represent the most prevalent behavioral health risks for older adults in Milwaukee County: 57%

lead sedentary lifestyles, while 30% are overweight. (WI Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1991-98).

Influenza and pneumonia vaccination is particularly important among older adults whose immune systems may not be as effective as those in younger populations. Particularly for minority elders, influenza vaccination rates among older adults are significantly lower for African Americans and Hispanics when compared to whites, with even greater disparities for pneumococcal vaccination. (Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well Being).

### **Insurance Status**

Health insurance coverage is not just a problem for young adults. Many older adults lack health insurance or have inadequate health insurance coverage. Particularly because health problems increase with age, a lack of insurance or inadequate coverage is cause for concern among elder populations. Some 9% of all persons age 55-64 nationally lack health insurance. This proportion increases to 23% among low-income adults within the same age range (The Commonwealth Fund, 2001 / The Urban Institute 2000).

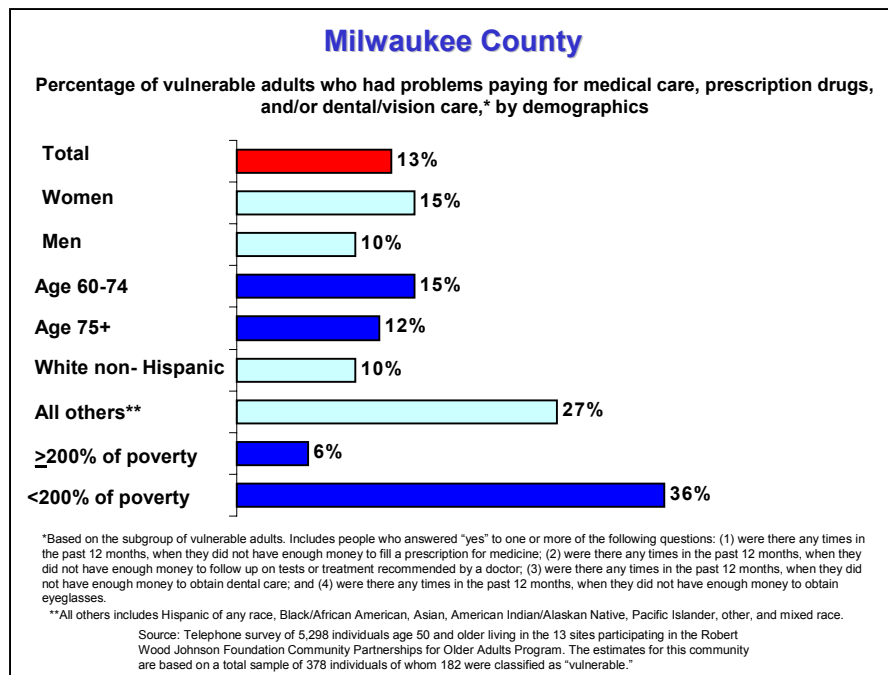
In Wisconsin, some 7% of persons age 60-64 lack health insurance and are not yet eligible for Medicare (WI Health Insurance Coverage 2000). Among the Medicare eligible population of older adults in Milwaukee County, approximately 4% may lack adequate health care coverage because they do not carry Medicare Supplemental Medical Insurance (Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services).

### **Use of Health Services**

While a significant number of older adults may have access to health care, many may be reluctant to use health care services. Some 7% of older adults (65+) in Wisconsin report not having seen a physician within the past year, while 20% report not having had a general physical examination during the same time period (WI Family

Health Survey 2001). More than one-fifth (20.2%) of vulnerable adults in Milwaukee County report they have not seen a doctor or other health care professional within the past three months (Mathematica).

Regular use of health services by older adults is particularly important in terms of dental health. Older persons are at greater risk for dental problems due to normal aging process, poor nutrition, and increased use of medications. While many older adults are keeping their teeth longer, their overall dental health status is poor due to a failure to obtain normal oral care. More than one-third of older adults in Wisconsin report they have not seen a dentist within the past year (WI Family Health Survey 2001).



## **Cost of Care**

The high cost of medical care is a significant barrier for many older adults in Milwaukee County. Six-percent of vulnerable adults report having problems paying for medical care, while 9% report having problems paying for dental or vision care (Mathematica). Prescription drug affordability is a major issue both nationally and in Milwaukee. The high cost of prescription drugs was an issue raised by older adults at almost every one of twenty public hearing sessions held throughout the county. More than one-quarter (28%) of vulnerable adults report that they have no prescription drug coverage, while 8% report having problems paying for prescription drugs (Mathematica). On a related note, Hearing Aid services was identified most often by older adults in the county as a service they would like to receive but are unable to find at an affordable price (Mathematica).

## **Mental Health**

A recent report of the Surgeon General estimated that 19.8% of older adults (55+) nationally suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder during a one-year period, not including severe cognitive impairments such as Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Nearly 4% of older adults nationally are afflicted with a serious mental illness (SMI), while approximately 1% suffer from a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Among the most prevalent mental health disorders affecting older adults are: Anxiety (11.4%), Simple Phobias (7.3%), Mood Disorders (4.4%), Agoraphobia (4.1%), Major Depressive Episodes (3.8%), and Unipolar Major Depression (3.7%) (Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. 1999). The United States Department of Health and Human Services estimates that one-quarter of older adults age 65+ nationally experience mental health related disorders including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

Four of the ten leading causes of disability in the United States are mental disorders, and mental disorders are among the leading causes of death and disability among older adults in Milwaukee County. Mental Disorders was the seventh leading single cause of death among older adults (65+) in the county during 2001, with 342 deaths comprising a mortality rate of 281.9 per 100,000 (Wisconsin AIM). During the same year, some 1,193 older adults were hospitalized in the county due to psychiatric illness at a rate of 9.8 per 1000, higher than rate in Wisconsin of 6.5 per 1000 (Public Health Profile 2001).

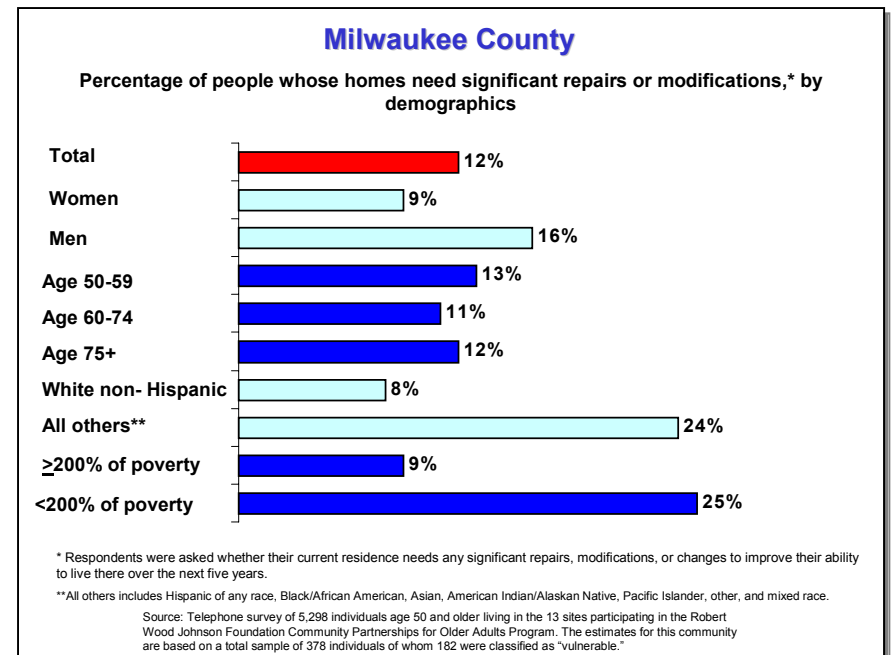
Statistics provided by the Milwaukee County Department on Aging indicate mental health related referrals are increasing among the aging population in the county. Annual alcoholism related referrals for older adults more than doubled during 2000-02 from 36 to 79. Unfortunately, the availability of mental health related services for older adults in Milwaukee County is limited. There are a lack of elderly only counseling groups for mental health and substance abuse issues, and a need for more assisted living and group homes with substance abuse and mental health services for older adults (MCDA Public Hearings / Milwaukee's Long Range Plan for the Homeless 2001). Members of the community identify a need for strong advocacy efforts, additional information and assistance, and better funding for aging related mental health services.

## ***Housing & Homelessness***

### **Aging Housing Stock**

Much of the housing stock in Milwaukee County is aging rapidly and in need of repair. Nearly two-thirds (62.8%) of housing in the county is 40 years or older, with approximately one-third (29.0%) 60 years old and older (US Census 2000). A survey of older adults in Milwaukee County conducted by Mathematica found that home

maintenance or repair was identified second most often by older adults (19%) as a service they would like to receive but were unable to find at an affordable price. Approximately 12% of older adults, and 14% of vulnerable adults report their home is in need of significant repairs or modifications in order to improve their ability to live there over the next five years (Mathematica). The percentage of elders reporting their home is in need of repairs is particularly high among ethnic minorities and among those with low income. Nearly one in four minority and low income elders reported a need for significant housing improvement, underscoring the significant need for improved housing among these particular elder populations within the county.



## **Increasing Housing Cost**

From 1990 to 2000 the median value of owner occupied units in Milwaukee County increased nearly 60% from \$65,300 to \$103,200 (US Census 1990, 2000). During that same period the median rent paid in Milwaukee County increased 53% from \$363 in 1990 to \$555 in 2000. Older adults within the community have identified the need for additional affordable housing options for older adults (MCDA Public Hearings). The high housing rates tax the budgets of many Milwaukee County older adults, with one-third (32.7%) of older adults reporting insecurity regarding their ability to remain in their current residence due to economic reasons (Mathematica).

## **Homelessness**

Lack of safe shelter is a problem faced by many Milwaukee County older adults. During 2002, approximately 1,200 older adults (60+) in the county used emergency shelter services (Community Advocates). Additionally, the 2001 *Long Range Plan for the Homeless* report identified a lack of emergency shelter capacity specific to the needs of older adults in the Milwaukee area. The high number of older adults in need of safe environments highlights an unfulfilled need of many older adults within the community. A recent public hearing addressed this issue, and noted that older adults within Milwaukee County often require financial planning and support as an aid to avoiding homelessness (MCDA Public Hearings).

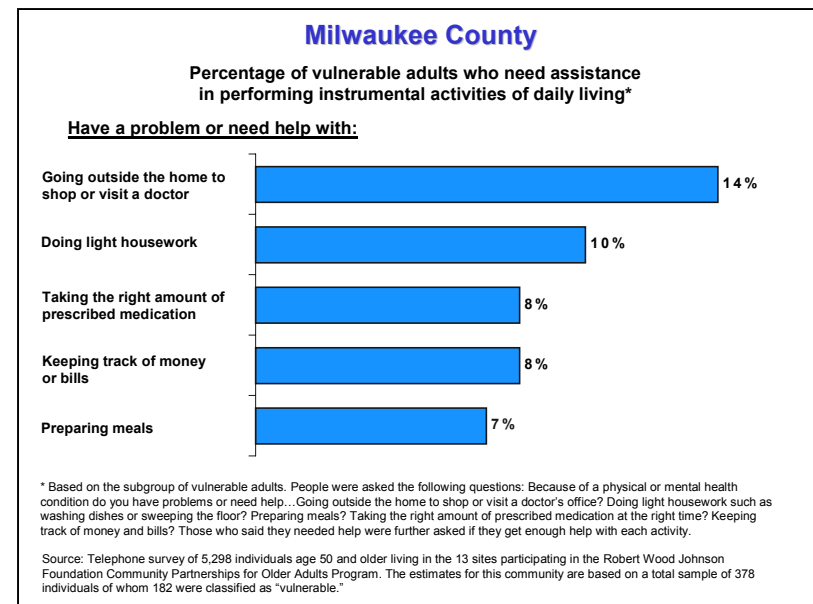
## **Transportation**

A recent study of specialized transportation services in Milwaukee County, *Specialized Transportation in Milwaukee County: A Model for Coordination* (1997), found that transportation resources in the county have not kept pace with increasing demand. Lack of transportation was reported by 7% of vulnerable adults as a reason

that keeps them from leaving their home more often (Mathematica). Some of the problems with the current specialized transportation services in the county include increasing fees, drivers not knowing their routes, no-shows, and a lack of cross-county coordination. The lack of quality transportation is an issue that is commonly voiced by older adults within the community. During public hearing sessions, older adults expressed the desire for increased access, greater flexibility, and better information about transportation services (MCDA Public Hearings).

## **Caregiving**

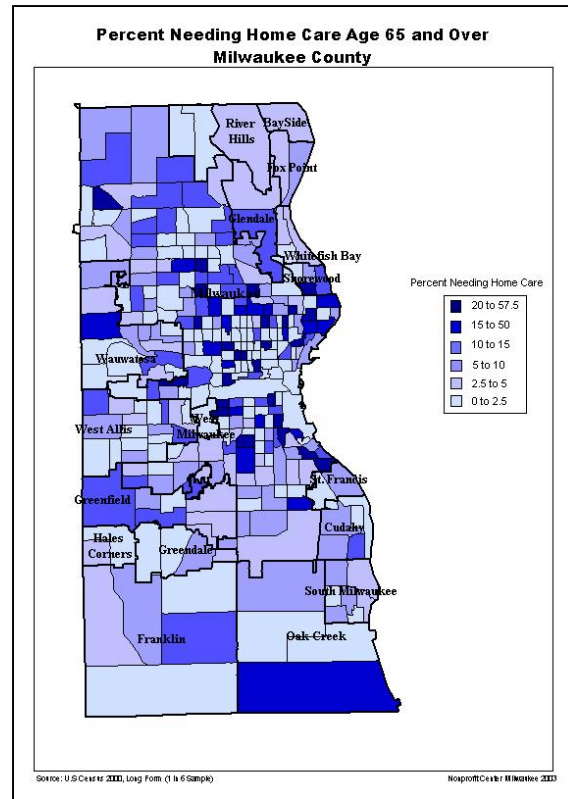
In Milwaukee County, 11% of vulnerable adults have one or more limitations in performing the activities of daily living (ADL) including taking a bath or shower, getting in and out of a bed or





chair, dressing, toileting, and eating. One-fifth (20%) have one or more limitations in performing the instrumental activities of daily living including going outside the home to shop or visit a doctor, doing light housework, taking the right amount of medication, keeping track of money, and preparing meals (Mathematica). Many others face more debilitating difficulties.

For caregivers, the emotional and physical drain of providing care and a lack of support for their efforts can be frustrating. Professional caregivers feel this lack of support in terms of inadequate pay and benefits, and a lack of opportunities for advancement. Family caregivers report that a lack of support from other family members and little recognition for the work that they do can be most frustrating (Focus Groups). Participants in public hearings identified the need for additional support for caregivers including improved training, increased wages, and additional opportunities for recognition. In addition, there is an ongoing need for affordable and accessible respite services (MCDA Public Hearings).



## **Long Term Care**

### **Home & Community Based Care**

Within Wisconsin there is a significant and increasing emphasis on home and community based care alternatives that maximize individual independence in the home and in other residential community settings including adult family homes (AFHs) and community based residential facilities (CBRFs). While progress has been made in actualizing home and community based care alternatives within the county, there is still a need to increase public awareness of the availability of alternatives to nursing home care (MCDA Public Hearings). In addition, there is a need for more assistance during the transition process from home to residential care for older adults and their family members.

### **Institutional Based Care**

Within Milwaukee County there is growing concern regarding the effect staffing shortages and abuse have on the quality of care in the nursing home setting (MCDA Public Hearings). During the past decade, nursing home utilization rates in Wisconsin have been decreasing among persons age 65 and older, dropping from 61.0 per 1000 in 1994 to 48.9 per 1000 in 2001 (WI Nursing Home Directory & Fact Book, 2001). In Milwaukee County, this and other issues have led to a number of nursing home closures. The county Department on Aging reports that since 2000, eleven nursing homes in the county have closed due in part to decreasing financial viability, staff recruitment/retention issues, and the successful diversion of individuals to community based care. As of 2001, 52 nursing homes in the county had a combined 7,356 licensed beds, with 6,844 beds set-up and staffed, and maintained an average daily census of 6,143. (WI Nursing Home Directory & Fact Book, 2001)

### **Cost of Long Term Care**

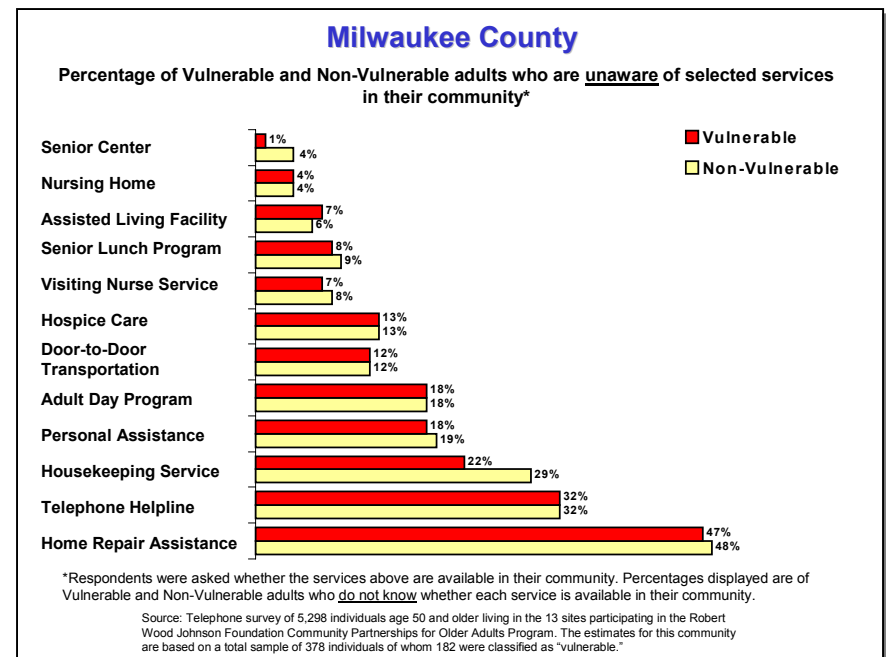
Many older adults in Milwaukee County lack knowledge of the coverage and cost of long term care services. Nine out of ten older adults in the county lack long term care insurance. Many would have difficulty or be unable to bear the cost of long term care services should they require them. Nearly half (48%) reported they would be unable to pay \$100 per week or more for help with personal care at home. More than one-third (39%) do not know whether Medicare covers help with personal care at home, while over half (55%) do not know whether Medicaid covers this service (Mathematica).

### **Access, Information & Referral**

Older adults in the county have clearly voiced their desire for easily accessible and understandable information about services and programs. Knowing where and how to get the information they want continues to be a problem for many. Some of the issues faced by older adults and their caregivers include not knowing what is available, confusing language, long waits for information and assistance, and limited after-hours availability. Fifteen percent of older adults in Milwaukee County would not know where to turn for information about help with personal care at home. Many others are unaware of the availability of specific aging services in the community including Home Repair Assistance (50%), Telephone Helpline (37%), and Housekeeping Services (34%) (Mathematica).

While the existing Elderlink telephone helpline provides a ready source of information and assistance and serves as a single point of entry to aging related services and programs in the county, there continues to be limited awareness of the service among those who would most benefit from its use. In a series of recent focus groups, none of the individuals representing the general public and

caregivers knew about Elderlink or what it offers, while only half of older adult participants were aware of the service. In fact, many older adults in Milwaukee County would first turn to a physician or other health care provider for information. Health care providers were mentioned most often by older adults (48%) as a source of information for help with personal care at home (Mathematica).



### **Diversity & Cultural Competence**

#### **Race & Ethnicity**

Older adults of color (60+) comprise 15.2% of the older adult population in the county and reflect the rich background of the many

cultural groups that settled the area, from the relatively recent influx of Russian Jews and Hmong to the well-established communities of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American older adults. Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of all minority elders in Wisconsin reside in Milwaukee County, including 82.0% of Black or African American elders, 32.1% of Asian elders, 21.8% of Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander elders, 13.2% of American Indian or Alaskan Native elders, 54.0% of elders of Some Other Race, 30.8% of elders of Two or More Races, and nearly half (47.3%) of all Hispanic or Latino elders in the state. All of this underscores the need to provide culturally and ethnically relevant materials and outreach activities, and increase cultural competence among service professionals and within service systems throughout the county.

### Sexual Orientation

National estimates of prevalence in a general population of from 9-10% indicate the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community of older adults in Milwaukee County numbers from 9,000-15,000 persons, an estimate believed to be conservative by local advocates based on the attractive nature of urban life for persons in the LGBT community and the resultant in-migration of LGBT individuals from more rural communities in Wisconsin. A recent assessment of the needs of LGBT older adults (50+) in Milwaukee County conducted for SAGE Milwaukee by the University of Wisconsin Medical School Center for Urban Population Health highlights the need for age appropriate housing and additional opportunities for socialization and recreation for this population.

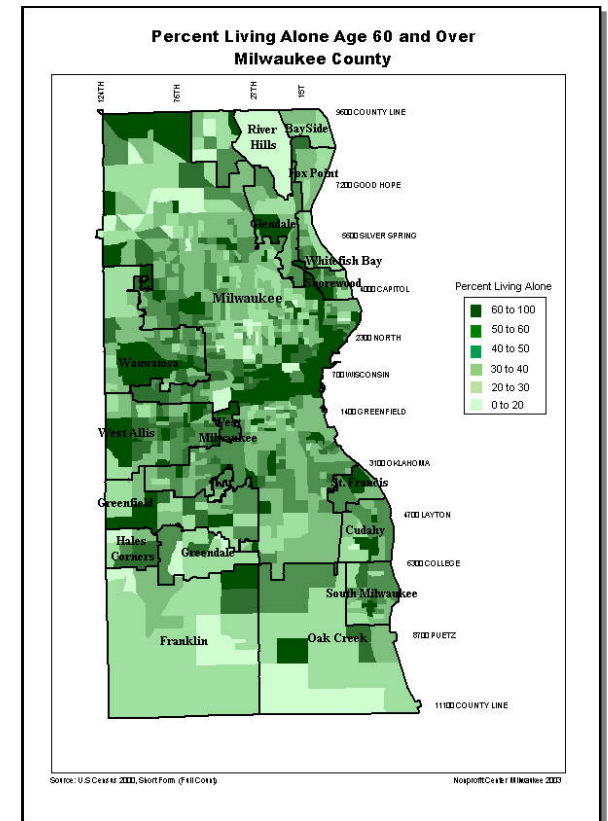
***"We all have the need to feel connected to those around us and to the community."***

## Community Connections

### Social Isolation

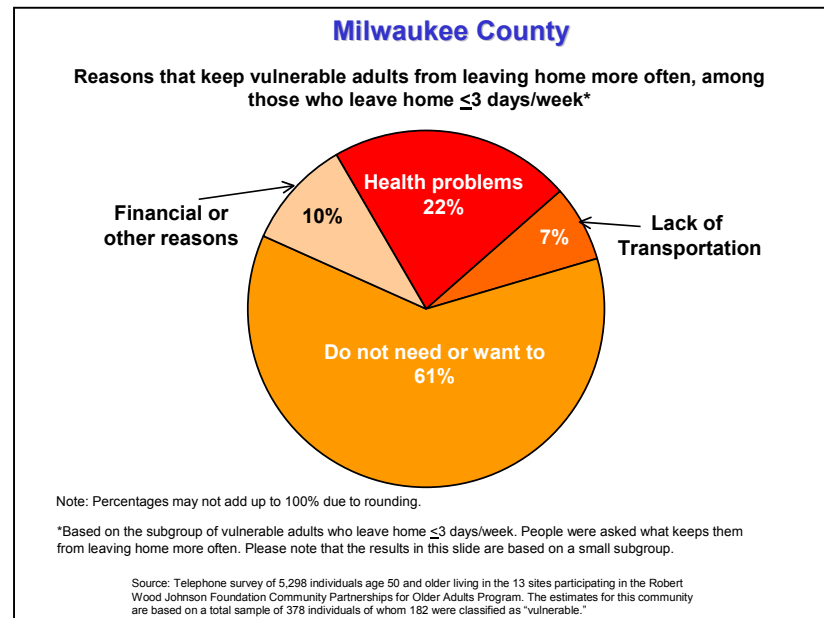
The risk of social isolation increases with increasing age due to a number of factors including the loss of family and friends and decreasing mobility. Almost one-third (31.1%) of older adults age 60+ in Milwaukee County live alone, with nearly half (46.5%) of all older adult (65+) households in the county comprised of an older adult living alone (Census 2000).

Some older persons may rarely or never leave their homes. Nearly one-third (32%) of vulnerable adults report they leave their home three days per week or less, with 3% never leaving their home during the week for any reason. Eight percent (8%) of older adults surveyed reported they had not participated in at least one social, religious, or cultural activity within the past week. Nearly one quarter (24%) reported they had not socialized



with family, friends, or neighbors during the past seven days; 39% reported they had not attended a place of worship; and 40% reported they had not attended a movie, play, concert, sporting event, club meeting, or other cultural event. More than one-third (38%) of older adults surveyed in the county indicate they would like to be more socially active (Mathematica).

Many older adults may be unable to participate as a member of the community due to ill health, lack of transportation, low income, or fear for personal safety. Vulnerable adults in Milwaukee County report that health problems (22%), financial reasons (10%), and a lack of transportation (7%) prevent them from leaving home more often than they would like. Fear for personal safety due to crime was found to be the number one issue of concern among older adults participating in series of surveys, interviews and focus groups conducted in the Sherman Park and Layton Boulevard neighborhoods. Though the fear of crime may be more serious than the actual risk, the perception of personal safety as an issue often



limits the willingness of older adults to venture into the community, socialize with neighbors, and utilize public transportation (Target Neighborhoods).

### Community Satisfaction

Helping older adults to feel involved and connected to the community is the challenge in Milwaukee County. One-third (30.9%) feel local officials don't take into account their interests and concerns, and believe they have little or no control in making their community a better place to live (29%). Though much of this fatalism may be attributable to a brief period of political disquiet\*, it is significant that many older adults feel the community should be doing more to meet their needs. Some 81% of older adults in the county indicate the community needs to do more in dealing with the needs of frail elders, with 77% feeling that this is either very or extremely important (Mathematica).

## Summary of Issues

### Health & Health Care

Access to care  
Cost of services  
Prevention & wellness

### Mental Health

Early identification  
Elder specific programs

### Housing

Availability/Affordability  
Home repair

### Transportation

Access  
Affordability  
Reliability

### Caregiving

Caregiver retention  
Cost of care  
Caregiver support & respite

### Long Term Care

Home & community based services  
Information & terminology  
Early education & planning  
Stigma/negative perceptions

### Access, Information & Referral

Service coordination  
Access to information  
Outreach & education  
Knowing whom to ask for help

### Diversity & Cultural Competence

Culturally competent programs & material  
Outreach  
Education / cultural sensitivity


### Community Connections

Isolation  
Sense of community  
Lack of community involvement  
Community satisfaction  
Personal safety

# Establishing Priorities

## Prioritizing the **Issues of Concern**

At a June 3, 2003 meeting, the Partnership reviewed the information contained in this report regarding the status of older adults in Milwaukee County. Partners were then asked to help prioritize the issues of concern for older adults in Milwaukee County. An additional issue identified during the meeting, Elder Abuse, was included as a tenth issue. Issues were ranked from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most important.



**Milwaukee County's  
Connecting Caring Communities Partnership**

**Prioritization of Issues**

Below is a list of the issues of concern for older adults in Milwaukee County that have been identified by the Core Leadership and four working groups through a in-depth analysis of surveys, focus groups, and other pertinent information about our older adults. We are asking the Connecting Caring Communities Partners to help prioritize these issues. Would you please rank the following from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important? If during the discussion on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, another issue is identified, it will be included as a tenth issue, and prioritization will be from 1 to 10. Thank you for your help.

Issues of Concern for Older Adults in Milwaukee County

- \_\_\_\_\_ Health and Health Care
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mental Health
- \_\_\_\_\_ Housing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Caregiving
- \_\_\_\_\_ Long Term Care
- \_\_\_\_\_ Access, Information, and Referral
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diversity and Cultural Competence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Community Connections
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

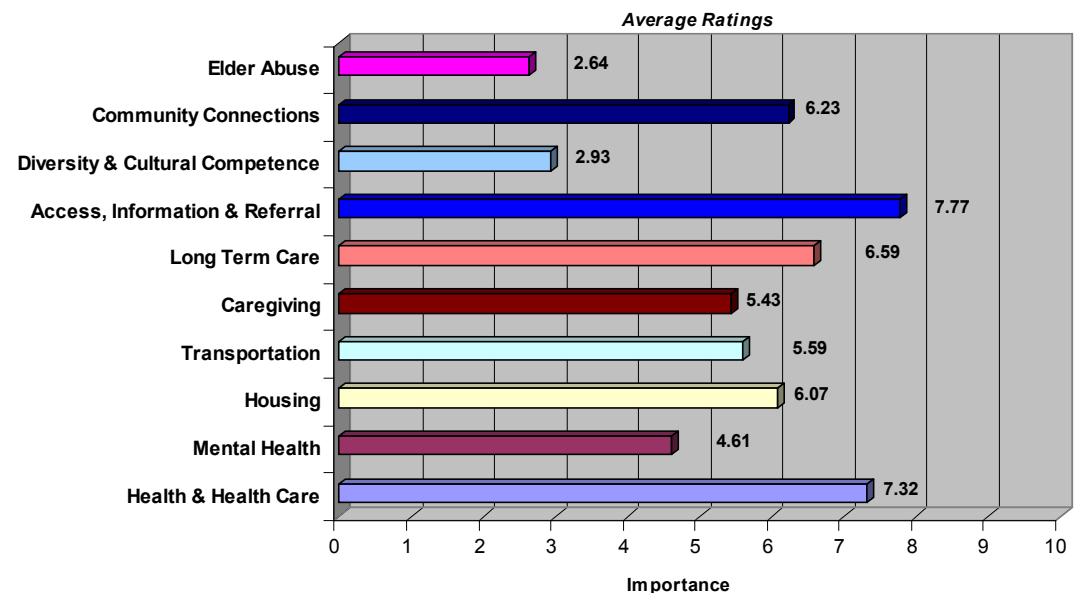
Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities Partnership

### *Issues of Concern for Older Adults in Milwaukee County*

**Prioritized by Connecting Caring Communities  
Partners June 3, 2003:**

- (1) Access, Information and Referral
- (2) Health & Health Care
- (3) Long Term Care
- (4) Community Connections
- (5) Housing
- (6) Transportation
- (7) Caregiving
- (8) Mental Health
- (9) Diversity and Cultural Competence
- (10) Elder Abuse

### Issues of Concern for Older Adults in Milwaukee County





## ***Milwaukee County's Connecting Caring Communities Partnership Members***

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50 Plus  
Affiliated Home Health Care, Inc.  
Alexian Village  
Alterra Clare Bridge  
Alzheimer's Association of Southeastern Wisconsin  
Aurora Health Care  
Black Women 50+ Magazine  
Blue Cross/Blue Shield  
Catholic Charities  
Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
City of Milwaukee 6<sup>th</sup> District Police Station  
City of Milwaukee Department of City Development  
City of Milwaukee Office of the Mayor  
Clement Manor Inc.  
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups  
Community Advocates  
Community Care for the Elderly  
Community Care Organization  
Community Living Centers, Inc.  
Compassionate Choice, Inc.  
Cooperative Care  
Covenant Health Care  
Creatonomy  
Daughters of Luke Ltd  
Doyle Communications  
Eastcastle Place  
ElderSpan Management  
Eppstein Uhen Architects  
Family Caregiver Support Network  
Family House  
Faye McBeath Foundation  
Friendship Living Center  
Friendship Village  
Froedtert & Medical College  
Generations Day Center at Milwaukee Catholic Home  
Greater Milwaukee Chapter of the American Red Cross  
Greater Milwaukee Foundation  
Hadley Terrace Apartments  
Harbour Village  
Harrington & Lobotsky Agency  
Havenwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center  
Heartland Health Care Center  
Helen Bader Foundation  
Historic Layton Boulevard Association  
Home Instead Senior Care

Horizon Home Care and Hospice  
Independence First  
Initiative for a Competitive Inner City  
Interfaith Older Adult Programs  
Jefferson Court Apartments  
Jewish Family Services  
Knueppel Healthcare Services  
Krause Funeral Home  
Lakewood Health and Rehabilitation Center  
Laureate Group  
Layton Boulevard Ambassadors  
Layton Boulevard West Neighbors Sacred Heart Center  
Lincoln Financial Advisors Corporation  
Luther Manor  
Lutheran Home Day Services  
Manor Park Foundation  
Marian Franciscan Center  
Marquette University  
    College of Communication  
    Wisconsin Geriatric Education Center  
Marshall & Ilsley Corporation  
Meadowmere Assisted Living Apartments  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
    Center for Healthy Communities  
Mercy Rehabilitation Center  
MetLife Financial Services  
Metropolitan Associates  
MidAmerica Healthcare Corporation of Wisconsin  
Milwaukee Aging Consortium  
Milwaukee Area Technical College  
Milwaukee County  
    Commission on Aging  
    Board of Supervisors  
    Department on Aging  
    District Attorney's Office  
    Executive Office  
Milwaukee Christian Center  
Milwaukee Public Schools  
Milwaukee Recreation Experience Life  
Mitchell Manor  
Municipal Health Services Program  
New Health Services  
Oakton Manor  
Pentecost Lutheran Church  
Plunkett Raysich Architects

ProHealth Home Care  
Rolland Nelson Crossroads Hospice  
SEIU Local 150  
Senior Pathways Agency  
Senior Statesmen of Milwaukee County  
SET Ministry, Inc.  
Sherman Park Community Association  
Social Development Commission  
Social Security Administration  
St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care  
St. Camillus  
St. John's Home of Milwaukee  
St. Luke South Shore  
Stowell Associates  
Supportive Homecare Options, Inc.  
Terrace at St. Francis  
Towne Realty  
United Community Center  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
    Center on Age & Community  
    School of Allied Health Professions  
        Department of Human Movement Sciences  
        Department of Occupational Therapy  
    School of Architecture & Urban Planning  
        Department of Urban Planning  
        Institute on Aging & Environment  
    School of Nursing  
VCM, Inc.  
Village at Manor Park  
Visiting Angels  
Visiting Nurse Association  
Visiting Physicians  
Vollrath Associates, Inc.  
We Four Program, Inc.  
Westside Senior Day Center  
Wisconsin Adult Day Association  
Wisconsin Assisted Living Association  
Wisconsin Caregiver Association  
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services  
Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Service, Inc.  
Wisconsin Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership  
Writer On the Run  
Zigman Joseph Stephenson

***Now at sixty what I see...***

***A Report on the Lives of Milwaukee County's Older Adults –  
How They Live In and Give To Our Community***

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Prepared by E jj Olson & Associates, Milwaukee, WI